PACIFIC SCHOOL OF RELIGION

Christian Community

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WHAT IS GOING ON IN RACE RELATIONS?

In Evangelical and Reformed Churches

By Jefferson P. Rogers

The Evangelical and Reformed Church is one of the original group of Protestant churches who, in 1946, through the Federal Council of Churches dedicated themselves to the creation of "an integrated church in an integrated society."

In 1947, the General Synod authorized the Board of National Missions and the Commission on Christian Social Action to add an associate secretary to assist them in implementing the principle of integration. These agencies felt that the step thus authorized should be made the symbol of the larger goal. Therefore, a Negro was chosen to fill the position. He transferred his membership from the African Methodist Episcopal Church to the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

Thus, the race-relations program of the Evangelical and Reformed Church started a new era on a tangible, practicable footing. While there had been race-relations work in the church before, the new work is different in that a larger number of objectives have been set up together with a program more specifically designed to reach them.

Even though the new program did not take effect overnight, it, nevertheless, started a steady, encouraging development. In several places local churches began to assume different attitudes toward problems which they previously did not regard as problems at all. Minority groups usually referred to as nuisance groups came increasingly to be thought of as persons with potentialities normal to all human groups. In many

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cases, they were regarded as a means through which the local church might enrich its institutional life. The fact that caste-like patterns of living make it difficult to change old standards of conduct does not in any way alter this new regard for so-called out-group peoples. All of the "top leadership" expected difficulty and prepared for it. They also expected progress and prepared for it.

It was necessary for the church to start its program by developing contacts with racial groups that it knew very little. Associations with Negroes, the largest of the racial minorities, were limited. This meant that much time was spent in creating contacts—which was not necessary for those Protestant denominations which had historical relationships with Negro people. The Secretary for Race Relations served as interpreter and liaison agent in these first

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In Evangelical and Reformed Colleges

In the Fall of 1947, when the Evangelical and Reformed Church began its race-relations program, very few of its colleges were substantially integrated on the student body level. Franklin and Marshall, the largest of these institutions, had one Negro student—the first in the history of the school. Sumner Bohee, while being thoroughly a part of the college family, was a town student. His lack of participation in dormitory life left something to be desired in this first inter-racial experience. Heidelberg College, in spite of a long history of "open policy" had no Negro students at this time. It cannot be said that Heidelberg was not interested in an interracial program. Neither can it be said that the administration was sufficiently aware of the need to project a program specifically designed to attract Negroes who, because of American racial patterns, would seldom think of church-related colleges as normal outlets for higher training. Cedar Crest, Elmhurst, Mission House and Ursinus Colleges were, in effect white institutions—none having experienced the presence of a Negro student, all having a qualified welcome for the other racial minorities in their midst. Among the seminaries, Eden alone could boast of substantial interracial history, and even it had questions yet to be faced within the context of the problem of race.

Subsequently, all of these schools have made real progress in race relations. Formerly known as virtually 'all white' schools under Protestant auspices, they

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In "E & R" Colleges

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are increasingly being identified as inclusive institutions which welcome both racial and religious minorities. Franklin and Marshall added three new Negro students in the fall of 1948 . . . graduated its first Negro in 1950 . . . added approximately five more students in 1951 . . . saw its first white fraternity add a Negro to its roster . . . participated in its first exchange student program with a Negro College, Morehouse of Atlanta, Georgia . . . included several Negro artists and speakers in its numerous religious emphasis week programs . . . and on one occasion made a valiant attempt to fill a teaching vacancy with a Negro instructor.

In 1948 Cedar Crest College participated in its first student exchange with Talladega College in Alabama, a Negro school under Congregational Christian auspices. In such a project each school sends one of its students to the other for a semester or year. Each such exchange student participates in all of the activities normal to the prosecution of his course-work and social life. This provides for the sane, integrated living for which every truly democratic institution stands. The 1948 exchange experience for the first time brought a Negro student into the Cedar Crest college family. There have been two follow-up exchanges, and in the present academic year there are two Negro students enrolled in the college, which now truthfully states that it is a college open to all young women with the required character and academic background.

Heidelberg College has had more than one Negro student each year since 1948-1949, reaching a high point of five in both 1951-52 and 1952-53. Negroes have represented Heidelberg on its glee club, football and basketball teams. Calvin Dilworth, a Negro student from Rankin, Pennsylvania, set a new high-scoring mark in basketball competition during last season. The school's exchange student project with Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina, a Negro girls' school under Methodist auspieces, was the subject of feature articles by Religious News Service and several major newspapers and magazines. These projects, together with several other developments, have brought Heidelberg to a front-running position among church-related colleges striving to become genuinely inclusive institutions.

Human Rights

is one of a number of current issues to be considered at the 1953 Churchmen's Washington Seminar, February 24-27. See what makes Government tick. Write your own social action agency.

Elmhurst College began its recent program of integration in the fall of 1949 with three splendid students, one of whom is its only Negro alumnus and another who is now a senior. Presently there are four Negro members of the Elmhurst student-body who participate in every phase of the activities of the college family. There are no unwritten rules as to the character of the Negro students' life at Elmhurst. One can truthfully write that a revolution has occurred in the life of the campus. Once afraid even vigorously to discuss racial inclusiveness, it now has Negroes on its track team, newspaper staff, theater guild, glee club, debating society, Student Christian Association, pre-theology student group and honor society.

Since 1947, Mission House has had three Negro students from Africa, two of whom have already graduated. One of them had extensive work as a speaker and caravaner in Evangelical and Reformed circles. The remaining student is the only Negro in the present student-body. The administration has made it clear that it is as much interested as any of our colleges in having a racially inclusive student family.

Lancaster Seminary, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is participating in its first student exchange this year. The cooperating school is Lincoln Seminary in Lincoln University, Oxford, Pennsylvania. The project has gone splendidly thus far. One of the sideline results is that Miss Jean Myers, fiancee of the Lancaster exchangee, was elected Miss Homecoming at Lincoln, marking the first time that a Caucasian has been so honored. This beginning for Lancaster Seminary is auspicious and, it is hoped the first in a series of interracial developments.

Ursinus College welcomed its first Negro student in the fall of 1950, and enrolled two more Negro students in September of the present year. Ursinus is the latest among "E. and R." institutions of higher education to initiate a practical program in racial integration. Each of the Negro students is engaging in intercollegiate athletics—one in football, the other in soccer.

All of these developments have been facilitated and in many instances directly planned through the race-relations office, jointly sponsored by the Commission on Christian Social Action and the Board of National Missions. All of the Elmhurst students referred to, with one exception, have received assistance through a scholarship fund provided by the Board of National Missions. Therefore, the church may take most of the credit for this real advance on the college level. It is a splendid record which, considered from the perspective of the beginning in 1947, qualifies as one of the major accomplishments in Protestantism.

In the over-all advance in these colleges, remarkable assistance has been provided by the Youth Fellowship of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. One of the five students at Heidelberg College and one of the two students at Cedar Crest College—Barbara Calhoun and Jane Nabors, respectively—received grants from the Youth Fellowship in the collective amount of six hundred and fifty dollars. The young people in the church have played a major role in this drive towards Christian realism.

Unfortunately, all is not on the credit side, for there remain two major schools within our denomination that have not managed to achieve the status of integration. Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, and Catawba College in Salisbury, North Carolina, do not admit students of known Negro ancestry. Neither school has served any substantial number of other racial minorities. Both, therefore, remain schools primarily for students of Caucasian ancestry.

It is hoped that the next five years will reveal as much progress as have the last. If so, it is likely that in this one area, at least, we will be bearing Christian witness to our faith in God through Jesus Christ by serving whoever comes to be served and by persuading whoever leads himself to persuasion.

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In recent months CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY has carried articles on race relations by Galen Weaver of the Council for Social Action staff. In this issue the Reverend Jefferson P. Rogers, Associate Secretary of the Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, reports on the race relations program of his denomination.

International Relations Letter

December 1, 1952

A Congregational Christian minister in California was bothered by something in the International Relations Letter, published in the November, 1952, issue. His letter and my reply may interest CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY readers.

The Minister's Letter

Dear Mr. Reissig:

I have read with great interest your article in the current issue of *Christian Community*. May I ask you about one portion of it which seems to be obscure.

You state that the task of saving India from Communism is not the noblest of motives, but that it is "permissible." I just cannot understand why you say this. Is it not true that to save India from Communism would be most noble in motive? What is the purpose of using the word "permissible?"

It appears as one reads the passage that you were "playing down" the nobility and importance of "saving India from Communism."

Would it not be better to say: "To save India from Communism is a noble motive. Such a project is of the highest value."

I just cannot understand your obscure phrasing in the passage to which I have referred.

With sincere good wishes.

Reply

Dear Mr. ———:

I am a little puzzled by your difficulty in understanding my words about our motives for helping India but I will try to help you.

If you were to go to India, walk up to some of her starving, disease-ridden and illiterate people and say to them, "I am bringing help to you because I want to save you from communism," you would probably get a fairly cool reception. I will go further and say that you ought to! When a man is hungry he would like you to help him find food because he is in pain, not because, if you don't feed him, he might do something bad. Does not the New Testament insist that "the noblest possible motive," or, indeed, the only permissible motive in dealing with our fellowmen is a very simple and direct kind of love for God and man?

A few days ago I talked with a business man who is president of a large men's club in one of our Congregational Christian Churches. He said he thought our approach to communism had been too negative. I agree. And the reason for our too-negative approach seems to me to be that we are dealing with the communist threat, particularly in the underdeveloped areas, primarily out of fear—and not even fear of what communism would do to them, but fear of what a victory of communism in those parts of the world would do to *us*. Too much of our strategy is basically self-regarding. The people of those areas sense this and are, therefore, not as responsive to our approach to them as we would like them to be. They are saying to us, in effect, "Do you come to us because you love and respect us as human beings and want to help us find a way out of our misery, or only because you are frightened by communism?"

I am quite well aware that nations do not help other nations out of pure benevolence. They do not act until their own life is involved. We have to take account of, and use, the motive of self-interest. But the question here is about Christian motives and I was trying to say, by implication, that we should help India for love of God and man, even if there were no threat of communism. Don't you agree with that? Our central motive in helping India should be, what it always should have been: the constraining love of Christ. Beneath this, it is, I think, permissible to have the motive of steering them away from communism. If you should be inclined to reply that this amounts to the same thing, I would reply that it is not the same thing at all.

You write, "It appears as one reads the passage that you were 'playing down' the nobility and importance of 'saving India from Communism'." Frankly, that looks to me as if you were determined to find some softness toward communism in the article. I even suggested as a title for a church program on India, "That India May Remain Free!" And I went on to speak of "the wretched sort of thing we have in Russia and China." How do you get any "playing down" out of that? Furthermore, that whole section of my article starts from the premise that Americans would better bestir themselves if they don't want India to go the way of China.

All of us want to stop, what I have called elsewhere, "the blight of communism." What bothers me about the approach to this of some American Christians is that their basic motivation and analysis seems not Christian at all but deeply secularist. Forgive me for saying that you almost give an illustration of this when you confess your inability to understand how there could be a higher motive for dealing with India than fighting communism.

Reminder

If any organizations or persons in your community are spreading what you believe to be misinformation about UNESCO or the UN or the proposed Covenant of Human Rights, don't forget that the CSA has a packet of materials on each of these subjects. One packet, 50 cents. All three for one dollar. The UN is having a tough time and some people, who apparently never have been converted from an impossible nationalistic outlook, are using the present situation to discredit the organization. Those who know that the world situation is tough (to put it mildly!) will not allow their faith in the UN to weaken just because the going is difficult.

Great Stuff

The Council on Foreign Relations is making available to hundreds of local groups some really wonderful material for discussions on international affairs. Here's what you can get: 1. An attractive illustrated reprint of a timely article in FOREIGN AFFAIRS magazine. (Example: "India — Do's and Don'ts for Americans.") 2. An outline for discussion of the article, with book and magazine suggestions for further reading. 3. A free subscription to the best magazine on foreign affairs now being published. The discussion material is issued nine times a year. How can you get it? You must have a regular discussion group of at least five members. (Not sent to individuals.) You must order the materials through your national organization (CSA or CCSA) giving number of people in your group. It's really great for live adult and student groups. This service, free of charge, is made possible through a grant —the Fund for Adult Education—Ford Foundation money. Why not start a discussion group if you don't have one and experiment with this good material.

Herman F. Reissig.

In "E & R" Churches

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months after September, 1947. The isolation of the great majority of Evangelical and Reformed laymen from Negro laymen made it necessary to explain many elementary things. However, the most important over-all change was from the negative attitude toward parish problems involving race to one of an increasing sense of responsibility for the community. A few of many possible illustrations of this fact are as follows:

1. St. Stephen's Church in *Buffalo, New York,* found itself in a mixed Negro and Caucasian community instead of the predominantly Caucasian parish it formerly was. The customary answer to situations like this is to move, if possible, or to go out of business. There were few people who thought St. Stephen's capable of doing anything else. It was not expected that an interracial church school and Sunday School would be developed there. Yet, they were. Of course, St. Stephen's cannot stop with these gestures, desirable though they be. The full "Fellowship Without Barriers" is the only answer that the true church can accept. It could happen that St. Stephen's would go the way of other historic failures in similar situations. Even so, its recent history illustrates the change of mood in the denomination within the era of our race-relations emphasis.

2. Holy Ghost Church in *St. Louis, Missouri,* struck a prophetic note by its declaration of an open door to all races and by becoming the first Evangelical and Reformed Church to have a student assistant who is a Negro.

3. The *Philadelphia Synod* became the first of the synods to develop a program designed to promote integration in its local churches. The first phase of the Synod's program was an intensive Round-Table series which lasted three months. Sixteen different sessions were held: four in each of the four sections of the Synod. These Round-Tables were conducted by the Secretary for Race Relations in cooperation with the Synodical Committee. None of these sessions closed without drawing up plans for follow-through in the various local churches. Plans for further synodical projects were also drawn up, and two meetings are scheduled between December and April 1st.

4. In the New York Synod, Martha Memorial Church in *New York City* has moved toward the inclusive fellowship. Its Sunday School has a substantial number of Negroes. A confirmation class of three, scheduled to join the Church next Palm Sunday, is all Negro. Bethlehem Church in *Newark, New Jersey,* has a Negro family of five attending services regularly. Both of these examples move in the direction of the denominational goal. They are not gigantic projects that indicate a startling revolution. They are, however, *significant* projects that indicate a steady, cumulative revolution. It might be argued that the mere attendance by one Negro family is hardly in itself the stuff of revolution. To which point one is compelled to agree. Yet, it is worthy of note that this church is no longer considered "out of bounds" by all Negroes within the community. Unfortunately, the "bad reputation" of many Protestant churches makes this "out of bounds" response normal for most Negroes. The test of this experience will be in its final outcome. The pragmatic challenge of all churches in the area of race is to convince the masses of their positive inclusiveness. In its first round Martha Memorial has met this challenge valiantly. Bethlehem has a splendid opportunity to do likewise.

5. The interracial caravans sponsored by the *Youth Fellowship* since 1948 constitute the most convincing clinical project since 1946. There is nothing which can take the place of dynamic, unembarrassed fellowship. The vigor with which the Youth Fellowship has gone about its task is a great light and a great inspiration to many people throughout Protestantism in America. The race-relations Secretary has worked steadily with this agency since 1947. He helped to nurture the first interstate inter-racial caravan which cleared the path for wider experiments in each year following the summer of 1948.

The reader should remember that these examples are chosen from many possibilities because of their illustrative character. Yet he is not to think that the great majority of our problems in race-relations are being solved, in which case he need not worry himself about them. This tendency often shows up in people who certainly ought to know better. Rather, he is asked to focus his attention on what can be achieved whenever one works. The extremes of pessimism and optimism should be avoided. Realism should be each Christian's philosophy in facing the challenge that the church confronts in the area of race-relations. By keeping our attention on the actual possibilities we can achieve, we will achieve. History indicates that integration *must* be realized. It *can* be realized.

Race Relations Sunday

Materials for your Race Relations Sunday Observance, February 8th, may be ordered from the National Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, as follows:

Race Relations Sunday Message, 5c each, $4 per hundred

Race Relations Sunday Packet, 15c each, $12 per hundred

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Additional copies may be obtained for 2 cents each. Requests from Congregational Christians should be addressed to Council for Social Action, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, New York. Requests by Evangelical and Reformed, and others, as well as news items and communications, should be addressed to the Editor, Huber F. Klemme, Commission on Christian Social Action, 2969 West 25th Street, Cleveland 13, Ohio.

Church and Economic Life Week

has been set for January 18 to 24 by the National Council of Churches. Resource materials are available from the Department of the Church and Economic Life, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10.